

# EDITORIAL/OPINION

## Drop excuses, try honesty

The Metropolitan Human Relations Commission plays an important and positive role in the community. It has been involved in one way or another — offering information, mediation, advocacy and organizing — in nearly every issue of concern to minority groups.

MHRC helped organize other concerned groups around such issues as synagogue desecration, the growth of white hate groups, and harassment of Southeast Asian refugees. It was heavily involved in the school discrimination situation — an explosive issue that required years of study, mediation and leadership. Their research is vital to the employment of minorities with the City and Multnomah County.

The performance of MHRC — its role, its direction and its leadership — is strong and proper.

The MHRC was deprived of its budget, staff and programs by the City Council at the insistence of its liaison commissioner, Margaret Strachan, with the aid of Mayor Frank Ivancie.

The justifications for these cuts have varied

depending on who was talking and who she was talking to. A new set of excuses is heard every few days.

What makes this issue of particular concern is not only the gutting of an essential commission, but the personal attacks on its executive director. The rumors coming out of City Hall, the personal attacks, are uncalled-for slander and libel.

One can only speculate about the real reasons for this action and the inability to provide adequate justification. Is it really a personality conflict or a personal quest for power?

One of the activities to be undertaken by MHRC in the coming year was to be a study of the City of Portland's use of federal economic development funds and their impact on the minority communities. Could be the City can't face the repercussions from such a study and its findings.

The real reason for the defunding of MHRC should be discussed frankly and honestly with the citizens and taxpayers.

## The American way of death

The fight of Jimmy Lee Gray to avoid the death penalty in Mississippi again turns attention to the cruel and unjust method society has chosen to punish its deviants.

The largest number in the nation's history — 1,050 prisoners — wait on death row. This is 22.7 percent more than just a year ago. The Justice Department reported that the rise of condemned prisoners is due both to length of appeals and to an increase in imposition of the death sentence.

Two men were executed during the year, one in Virginia and one in Texas. California and Florida led the nation in death sentences imposed during 1982 with 39 each, followed by Texas and Alabama. In 28 of the 37 states with the death penalty, people have been sentenced to die.

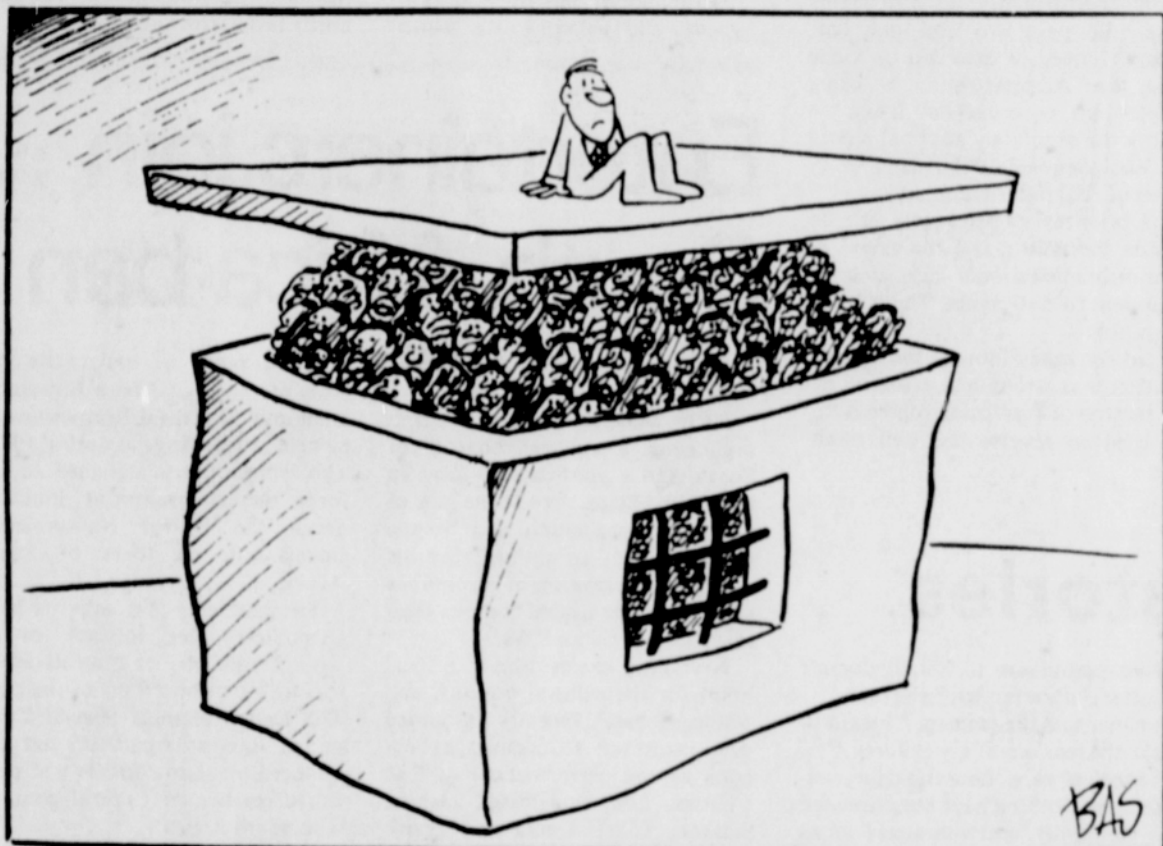
More than two-thirds of those on death row are in the South. The largest death row populations were Florida with 189, Texas with 148, California with 120 and Georgia with 100. Forty

percent of the prisoners on death row were black. Thirteen were women, 59 Hispanic, 7 Native Americans and 5 Asians.

Another telling statistic is that departures from death row by means other than execution have declined each year since 1976 except in 1980 when 42 inmates in Alabama had their death sentences invalidated by a court ruling.

Fifty percent of the inmates who left death row alive had their sentences or convictions overturned by the courts and 31 had their sentences changed. These are men who might have died for crimes they did not commit or whose crimes do not fit into the legal justification for the death sentence.

In spite of the great probability of injustice, Governor Victor Atiyeh is pushing for the death penalty in Oregon and if he is successful will subject the people of Oregon to the agony of the years and last few minutes of waiting on death row.



Receive your Observer by mail —  
Subscribe today. Only \$15<sup>00</sup> per year

Mail to: Portland Observer  
Box 3137  
Portland, Oregon 97208

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_



### Portland Observer

The *Portland Observer* (USPS 959-680) is published every Thursday by Exie Publishing Company, Inc., 2201 North Killingsworth, Portland, Oregon 97217, Post Office Box 3137, Portland, Oregon 97208. Second class postage paid at Portland, Oregon.

The *Portland Observer* was established in 1970.  
Subscriptions: \$15.00 per year in the Tri-County area. Postmaster: Send address changes to the *Portland Observer*, P.O. Box 3137, Portland, Oregon 97208.

Alfred L. Henderson, Editor/Publisher  
Al Williams, Advertising Manager



283-2486

National Advertising Representative  
Amalgamated Publishers, Inc.  
New York

## Quorum of One

by Greg Wasson

### Property tax relief strangled by sales tax fervor

SALEM — The 1983 Legislature has sort-of adjourned, and the 90 lawmakers have kind-of gone home.

But, as has been well-documented, the lawmakers failed to design a property tax relief plan, and Gov. Vic Atiyeh has promised to call the body back to Salem in late August or early September.

Popular logic lays responsibility for the legislative inaction on Senate President Ed Fadeley, D-Eugene. According to many, Fadeley thwarted the will of the Senate by dismembering the sales tax and denying the full body a chance to vote on the plan.

However, most of us in Northeast Salem agree with observers like Charles Beggs of the Associated Press, who argues that if sixteen Senators had committed themselves to sending a sales tax to the people, Fadeley couldn't have stopped the move. The votes just weren't there.

In spite of this, the House Revenue Committee showed remarkable myopia. The panel equated significant property tax relief with adoption of a sales tax and then offered repeated versions of the same plan rather than the wide variety of proposals seemingly promised at the beginning of the session.

Indeed, when House Speaker

Grattan Kerans turned to his Select Committee on Property Tax Relief late in the session for an income-tax-driven property tax relief plan, the committee lacked sufficient data to prepare the legislation, this despite over six months of hearings and work sessions.

Is that Ed Fadeley's fault? Or should some of the blame be placed on those around the capitol who decided early in the session that there is only one way to spell property tax relief (s-a-l-e-s t-a-x)?

Seems a bit contradictory to label Fadeley unfair for the way he treated the sales tax in the Senate when no other option got more than cursory investigation in the House.

Of equal importance to the manner in which property tax relief is funded is the method used to distribute the money.

During floor debate on the spending limitation, Sen. John Kitzhaber, D-Roseburg, made a cry for responsibility, arguing that if the state simply fulfilled its constitutional obligation to provide public education, a large portion of current property taxes would become unnecessary and the property tax revolt would lose its steam.

Kitzhaber is correct, of course. If the state picked up the cost of the

schools, property tax bills would decrease. However, over half of the local property tax burden falls on commercial enterprises like Weyerhaeuser and 7-11. If the state simply picks up the costs of the schools, over half the relief goes to owners of business property.

That's not necessarily bad, however. One of the few attractive ideas of supply-side economics is that a strengthened economy benefits us all. Helping both large and small business enterprises does make sense. All we have to do is come up with the money.

The source? What about the over \$1.5 billion being returned each biennium to Oregonians under the Reagan tax cuts?

Perhaps the lawmakers should shape a plan that captures some of that money from taxpayers earning over \$50 thousand a year. The income tax code lends itself well to such targeting; there should be natural support for such an idea in a state where the median income is much closer to \$20 thousand a year, and the state would be using the Reagan tax cuts to fund education and aid property owners.

From this perspective, the sales tax has had more than its day in court. The jury has obviously voted no.



## Will blacks "go for the gold"?

by Dr. Manning Marable "From the Grassroots"

The Summer Olympics are scheduled to be held in Los Angeles from July 28-August 12, 1984. Although the games are over a year off, entrepreneurs, politicians, and corporate leaders — both black and white — have been making plans for big profits since 1979. At many levels, the Olympics are for some a test for the viability of the economic strategy of "Black Capitalism" and the fiscal programs of Black politicians.

Los Angeles is, first of all, a city of stark economic contrasts — affluence and dire poverty, side by side. Black mayor Tom Bradley has maintained cozy relationships with the white private sector and financial establishment over the years. Much of the criticism he receives from the black middle class comes from disgruntled black businessmen who claim that they have not profited as much as they had hoped by the presence of a black mayor. A review of recent data from the Bureau of the Census indicates this. While there were 14,576 black-owned firms in the Los Angeles/Long Beach area in 1977, only 2,014 had any paid employees, about 14.4 percent. 618 black-owned construction firms without paid employees only averaged annual gross receipts of \$18,314. 2,678 retail stores without employees owned by blacks averaged annual gross receipts of only \$12,740. Even in the more affluent sectors of the economy, black entrepreneurs are far behind their white competitors. The 1,072 black-owned financial establishments, insurance companies and real estate dealers averaged gross annual receipts of \$51,360. The total number of employees working for all black-owned firms in both Los Angeles

and Long Beach in 1977 was only 9,963 persons.

The general view among most black business leaders was that the 1984 Olympics could be a boost to the black private sector's plight. As noted in the April, 1983, issue of *Black Enterprise*, black entrepreneurs were definitely "going for the gold." Black businessman Tyrone Hicks "plans to turn his \$17,000 investment to produce the official Olympic seat cushions into big profits." By the end of January, 1983, almost half of the accredited licensees who are using the official Olympic symbol on their products were black. Another black company, headed by Andrew Muse, ACMI International, plans to turn out "Olympic lap blankets." Starting with a modest investment of about \$50,000, ACMI International "projects its \$22 to \$35 Olympic lap blankets will gross \$8 million." To placate black community critics, planners of the 1984 games are projecting hundreds of temporary jobs, mostly at minimum wage levels, to accommodate the more than 250,000 daily spectators.

The Los Angeles Olympic Organizing Committee (LAOOC) is encouraging white corporations to "buy tax-deductible \$25,000 tickets that not only entitle the buyer to two premium seats to each event but also allow 50 children from low-income families to attend." Even John Carlos, the Olympic bronze medalist and Black Power advocate who raised his fist in the controversial Mexico City Olympic games of 1968, is now the community relations liaison for LAOOC. Carlos' advice to the black business community? "The possibilities are real.

People just have to get together and work a game plan."

The allure of gold has blinded many middle class blacks to the broader political implications of any Olympic games. In 1980, former President Jimmy Carter banned U.S. participation in the Moscow games because of the presence of Soviet troops in Afghanistan. But what of U.S. military involvement in El Salvador today? Or the Reagan Administration's cynical support for the brutal regime of apartheid South Africa, which murders and mutilates hundreds of black people daily? Or the U.S.-backed subversion of Grenada, Angola, and Nicaragua? Do politics take precedent over athletic competition?

A coalition of Americans have called for a demonstration for peace, jobs and justice at the 1984 games, in part to "ensure that local communities benefit from the presence of the Olympics." In their view, "there is no better way to carry forward the spirit of the Olympics than to bring together people in a rally for peace." The endorsers include actor William Marshall, former Carter Administration aide Midge Costanza, attorney Leonard I. Weinglass, Eugene Hernandez, state chair of the California La Raza Unida Party, and Mark Ridley-Thomas, director of the Los Angeles chapter of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.

Will the black community simply "go for the gold?" Or will we unite with other progressives in labor, church, and national minority communities, seizing the opportunity to make an international statement against war, racism, and poverty?



## Washington Hot Line

by Congressman Ron Wyden

WASHINGTON, D.C. — We hear daily of crime: crime in the streets, burglary and robbery. But we don't hear so much about what's shaping up to be the crime wave of the future: computer crime.

And some of the main victims of this sort of crime are our nation's small businesses.

This is not to say that some stories haven't appeared on this new threat. A story which appeared in the *Washington Post* recently told about a man in Virginia who allegedly used his home computer to gain private credit card information and then charged more than \$50,000 worth of goods. Another case tells of a firm in Louisiana that was bilked out of \$140,000 by an employee who programmed the company's computer to write him money orders and then erase the records. Many small businesspeople may not report that they have been vic-

tims of computer crime for fear that they will lose the public's trust, and hence their business. Reported crimes may be just the tip of the proverbial iceberg.

But one thing is certain: as our nation's small firms become more dependent on the computer to do their business, they become more susceptible to this brand-new threat.

Sadly, most businesspeople are ill-equipped to fight this type of crime. Without help soon, the small-businessperson could become a sitting duck for computer crime of all sorts.

That is why earlier this spring I introduced a bill that would be a first step toward giving the small-businessperson the tools to fight back.

The bill, entitled the Small Business Computer Crime Prevention Act, would create a task force of computer experts from government

and industry to outline the problem of computer crime and abuse, set up a clearinghouse for information on the subject, and develop guidelines to support small business computer security efforts.

In short, the bill would put in the hands of small businesspeople the knowledge they need to fight the keyboard criminal.

Hearings on the bill began this week in the House Small Business Subcommittee on Antitrust and Restraint of Trade, and I am hoping for swift action in the full committee and on the floor of the House.

Computer crime will not be an easy crime to stop, and this bill, unfortunately, will not bring it to a screaming halt. But I am hopeful that, with the creative partnership of government, business and the academic community, we can stunt the growth of high-tech theft.



MEMBER

NATIONAL NEWSPAPER Association - Founded 1895